

February 19, 2008

NOXIOUS WEEDS

PURPOSE OF THE BRIEFING DOCUMENT:

Noxious weeds continue to be the single largest threat to the natural resources of the nation. Noxious weeds continue to spread on all lands, reducing natural biodiversity and vegetation production and leading to soil erosion. Noxious weeds infest approximately five percent of BLM lands in Montana.

In 2007, the Montana/Dakotas BLM treated 346,067 acres using integrated weed management (IWM) methods in cooperation with other landowners and managers. An additional 2,067,970 acres were inventoried for weed infestations and 90,423 acres were monitored for the effectiveness of weed management efforts.

ISSUES:

The BLM's weed management program involves cooperative efforts with other federal and state agencies, universities, counties, high school agriculture science classes, and private landowners. There is heavy emphasis on using prevention techniques to protect non-infested lands. The BLM in Montana and Dakotas also uses early detection and rapid response (EDRR) to reduce new infestations and to use existing funds in the most cost-efficient manner. In the past, the magnitude of our weed program, particularly our cooperative agreements with counties and private cooperators, exceeded specifically earmarked weed funding in our annual budget. Discretionary funding in other programs that benefited from weed management was used to augment the program, but that funding is also declining.

The BLM cooperates in preventative and educational programs, including noxious weed videos, brochures, posters and other materials; certified weed seed free forage programs; biological weed control demonstration sites; IWM tours; and weed workshops. The Montana/Dakotas BLM staff will continue to provide training and technical assistance to various resource and weed management staffs. The BLM supports and incorporates the guidelines set forth in the January 2005 Montana Weed Management Plan in conjunction with other county, state, and federal agencies. The Montana/Dakotas also incorporated the management direction of the national strategy of "Partners Against Weeds" and the management plan from the National Invasive Species Council.

MAIN DECISION OR MESSAGE:

We are committed to doing the best job we can with available funding and will work cooperatively with our partners to set priorities. Montana BLM is also committed to IWM, which includes prevention, education, awareness, biological agents (insects and plant diseases), cultural practices, chemicals, physical, mechanical, re-vegetation and the use of domestic animals. To comply with both federal and state law, the BLM will continue to use an IWM approach and encourage all resource management disciplines to participate in active IWM. It is imperative that the BLM and other cooperators continue their efforts or the "weed battle" will be lost.

Weed management will continue to be a very high priority. There was considerable effort expended by our staff to apply for or assist cooperators to apply for outside source funding. Often these funds will have stipulations preventing their use on public lands which again limits our ability to meet the weed challenge.

BUREAU PERSPECTIVE:

Because BLM's weed program is a cooperative effort involving many counties as well as other state and federal agencies, high schools and universities, and private landowners, the effects of our reduced support will affect our various partners. There is a universal concern about the spread of noxious weeds and efforts to control them. Weed management cooperative groups and individuals will continue to petition congressional representatives for assistance with this problem.

CONTACT:

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